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SUBJECT: BOLIVIA: CDA, FM DISCUSS BILAT RELATIONSHIP

Classified By: A/EcoPol Chief Holly Monster for reasons 1.4 (b, d)

11. (C) Summary: Bolivian Foreign Minister David Choquehuanca welcomed new Charge d'Affaires James Creagan June 26 at what he called a "historic moment" in the country's history. Although he emphasized his desire to return the bilateral relationship to a state of normalcy, Choquehuanca admitted not everyone in the GOB shared this desire. He underlined the government's desire for investment, but only with the GOB in control and without damaging "mother earth." Choquehuanca discussed the arrival of the Secretary's special envoy Maria Echaveste to Bolivia and expressed his hope that framework agreement negotiations could be concluded in no more than "two or three" more meetings. End summary.

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FM Welcomes CDA Creagan, Hopes for Change
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12. (C) In a pleasant meeting at the Foreign Ministry June 26, FM David Choquehuanca and Director of Bilateral Affairs Jean Paul Guevara welcomed Charge d'Affaires James Creagan to Bolivia. Choquehuanca quickly expressed his hope that Creagan's arrival would coincide with a return to normalcy in the bilateral relationship, calling the May 20 and 21 visit by A/S Thomas Shannon "favorable" and a good step toward a new bilateral framework agreement. After expressing his optimism, however, Choquehuanca noted there was a "complicated history" between our countries. To illustrate what he said was the U.S.' dominant and "neoliberal" role in the country, he said that over the years one might speak of the "Embassy of Denmark or the Russian Embassy, but with the U.S., one only ever needed to say 'the Embassy' and it was obvious who you meant."

13. (C) Choquehuanca remained positive, however, and affirmed that "change is possible." He discussed how when he was growing up, "Chile was always our enemy... In the schools we learned this, and we marched every year and sang songs demanding access to the sea." Choquehuanca and Guevara sang one of the songs before Choquehuanca continued, "but now we have a new climate of dialogue with Chile; it is going well. We want better relations between peoples, with Chile and with all countries."

14. (C) Calling this period in Bolivia a "historic moment," Choquehuanca said the GOB desired investment and business partnerships that would benefit "a very poor country." "We can guarantee judicial security. We want investment. We have natural resources, like lithium. We want to bring technology here and add value to products." However, he said that as per the new constitution, the GOB would have to have majority control and such projects would have to "benefit mother earth too."

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Bilateral Talks: "Rapid Agreement"
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15. (C) Returning to the bilateral relationship, Choquehuanca said he hoped we could build on A/S Shannon's visit and complete a new framework or umbrella agreement quickly. "There is a permanent conversation between Shannon and (Bolivian Charge to the UN Pablo) Solon. They have agreed to postpone the next round of discussions from June 29 for two or three weeks until after we receive and review the U.S. counterproposal to our framework agreement draft. By the third round, we hope to close discussions. We don't want to wait many rounds for nothing. Let us not prolong this process." Charge affirmed Choquehuanca's desire for rapid progress toward a new agreement, which could be a kind of "umbrella" covering the myriad of specific accords. The Charge underlined the revitalizing presence of the new Obama administration and the Secretary's desire to "move forward."

16. (C) Choquehuanca then provided Charge with a rough agenda of meetings for the Secretary's special envoy, including discussions of ATPDEA, the extradition of former President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, the Millennium Challenge account, and counternarcotics cooperation. The meetings would take place with most of the same GOB representatives that participated in A/S Shannon's May 20 and 21 visit.

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Comment
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17. (C) FM Choquehuanca was very relaxed and told several stories, some of which illustrated his belief that a rapprochement in bilateral relations was possible, and others that were more barbed. After recalling that he "had never finished a book in his life," Choquehuanca amended the statement, saying he "had read one" (on managing conflict) when he thought he was to attend a seminar at Harvard. However, his visa was denied, and he said he found out he was on a "black list." Choquehuanca said he was proud to be on such a list and noted laughingly that after becoming Foreign Minister "they had to give me the visa!" On balance, however, Choquehuanca conformed to his role as the "positive face" of the GOB and repeatedly advocated closer ties. Still, Choquehuanca's views are not held universally in the government. After one exchange in which he evinced his desire to improve relations, Choquehuanca wryly admitted under his breath that "there were a few in the GOB" who did not feel that way. The Charge concluded the meeting by presenting Choquehuanca with President Obama's book (in Spanish) "The Audacity of Hope," remarking on its emphasis on hope. End comment.
CREAGAN